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RED CROSS WORK



A FURTHER REPORT OF THE NEW YORK MEETING

By MARY E. THORNTON, R.N.

THE committee on Red Cross nursing service is to be congratulated upon the success of the conference in awakening interest upon the part of the nurses of the county in the Red Cross, as evinced by the large attendance at all the lectures and the large number who visited the Field Hospital on Governor's Island.

The lectures given by Captain J. F. Siler, U.S.A., on the evenings of April 15 and 16, in Nightingale Hall, were instructive and interesting; in the first lecture Captain Siler went thoroughly into the personnel and materiel of the army; gave the organization of the infantry, cavalry and artillery, indicated briefly the commands of lieutenant generals, major generals, brigadier generals, colonels, lieutenant colonels, majors, captains, first and second lieutenants, dwelt upon the offices of judge advocate general, adjutant general, and upon the work of the inspector general's department and that of the department of quartermaster, the subsistence, the medical, the pay departments, the corps of engineers, ordnance department, and signal corps.

He described in detail the uses of the various hospitals located near the battlefield, and the method of rendering first aid, each soldier being supplied with a first aid box in a water-tight case. This contains two bandages with pads, a paper of safety-pins, and directions for use; every soldier has regular instruction in rendering first aid for a certain definite number of hours every year and if a soldier is found with his first aid box damaged or if he loses it, he may be tried by court martial.

After first aid the wounded are taken to the dressing stations, then to the field hospitals, then to the stationary hospitals; after that to the base hospitals, as the various needs of the men indicate. The method of transportation from the dressing station to the field hospital is by ambulance, if a man is unable to walk (for convenience in transportation hospitals should be located on or near a road); between field hospitals and base hospitals, transportation is by hospital train (these routes having rest stations with diet kitchens at intervals), and thence if men are to be disabled for a long time by hospital ship back to their homes.

Captain Siler spoke at some length upon the subject of the eradication

of disease from the service, emphasizing the fact that, "Prevention is the chief duty of medical officers in the army," dwelling upon the work of ridding Havana of yellow fever, of the fight with the malarial mosquito, of the value of screens and nets, the strict orders issued for the use of these two safeguards, and the careful oversight exercised to see that the orders are followed, it being the rule in malarial districts to make inspection after midnight to see that nets are down and the men protected. But of all the work under way, the campaign against typhoid holds for most of us, especially those who had service in 1898, the greatest interest. The recognition of the fly as the disseminator of typhoid, the steps taken for its extermination or exclusion, the use of sterilizers for the water, the disinfection of barracks, the use of incinerators, were all given in detail by Captain Siler, as well as the method of keeping typhoid patients under observation for ten weeks from the time of onslaught of the disease. At the end of that time (usually six weeks after recovery), if the patient has not ceased showing typhoid bacilli in the excreta, he is excluded from the army. With the welfare of the community of which he purposes becoming a member in mind, he is given a letter addressed to the health officer of that community, setting forth his condition and recommending that he be kept under observation.

Just here it may be of interest to add an interview given a member of the JOURNAL staff, upon the subject of vaccination for typhoid, by Captain Siler:

"This method of immunizing against typhoid has been tried for some time in England and in Germany, England especially having used it with great success during the South African War. Some time ago Major Russell of the medical corps went to England to study the matter; upon his return his report was submitted to a board of prominent medical men from different universities, Harvard, Cornell, Ann Arbor, Johns Hopkins, University of Pennsylvania, and the Rockefeller Institute being represented. The report was approved and a few months ago adopted by the government. All of the officers on duty in the office of the Surgeon-General in Washington have taken the treatment. Although it has been officially adopted, it is not compulsory, but many of the men in the hospital corps have been vaccinated and no doubt all will, as these men are, together with the medical officers, brought more directly in contact with the disease than in the other branches of the service.

"The method of procedure in giving the treatment is to heat the standardized serum to 53° Centigrade (it was brought to 60° C. at first), and inject in the arm one-half cubic centimetre; after ten days have elapsed, another injection of one cubic centimetre is given. A slight

feeling of lassitude, possibly a headache, is the only symptom exhibited as a result of the treatment which it is believed will rid the army of typhoid."

At the close of Captain Siler's lecture on April 16 Miss Gladwin gave a delightfully interesting talk upon her experiences with the Japanese Red Cross workers, telling how much might be learned from the Japanese woman, of her ideals, charm, and generally fine character, of the interest taken by the Empress and her ladies in the preparing of bandages and shirts for the sick or wounded, the latter being used as a special reward and greatly appreciated by those upon whom the honors were conferred. She spoke of the keen appreciation shown by the Japanese men for every slightest service performed for them; of their great celerity in transporting the wounded from shore to hospital ship and from ship again to the hospital, where every man's bed seemed to be quite ready for him upon his arrival, no matter how many were brought in on one ship.

Mrs. Charles Stevenson addressed the meeting on Thursday evening, making a strong plea for a large enrollment.

Captain Siler described the arrangement of the field hospital of one hundred and eight beds, admitting of being converted into two hundred and sixteen by using the tent flies. Specially interesting was the method of arranging the operation room from the compact outfit; the "units" containing blankets, sheets, pillow-sacks, towels, pajamas, and mosquito nettings; the furniture "units" containing six folding cots and the frames for the mosquito netting. All of this was arranged for practical demonstration on April 17 on Governor's Island. Captain Siler must surely have felt repaid for his courtesy and trouble, when boat after boat landed at the government dock bringing nurses eager to avail themselves of the opportunity to visit his field hospital.

We must learn to live,
Care-hardened at all points; not base and sensitive,
But plated for defense, nay, furnished for attack,
With spikes at the due place, that neither front nor back
May suffer at that squeeze with Nature we find—life.
Are we not here to learn the good of peace through strife,
Of love through hate, and reach knowledge through ignorance?

—ROBERT BROWNING.